

## Let's Keep the Gardening Trend Going in 2021

Last year at this time, I wrote an article on how gardens could provide some food security to us during the chaotic time we were all living through. There was a huge interest in gardening. I remember how our local suppliers couldn't keep vegetable transplants on the shelves! They were selling out that fast. Many folks tried gardening for the very first time. I hope the same interest in gardening continues this year.

Even if you didn't give gardening a shot last year, start this year! If you are thinking to yourself that you have never grown anything in your life and just don't think it's possible, let me assure you that it is possible. Even for the most novice! You might be thinking that you don't have space for a garden, or maybe you don't have a tiller or other equipment. Don't let that stop you because almost all vegetables can be grown in containers.

The containers don't have to be anything fancy. Literally, anything that can hold soil and have drain holes drilled in the bottom can be used. Containers that are 16 to 24 inches in diameter work well. Containers less than 12 inches are probably too small – except for lettuces. The most important component of growing vegetables in a container is getting the right potting media. Potting mixes are ideal (instead of soil from your yard). The components are lightweight and hold water and oxygen much better. Make certain that you don't forget to drill some drainage holes into the bottom of the container.

Fertilizer should be added at planting time and mixed into the soil. If you want to go the organic route, mix blood meal or bone meal into the soil before planting. If you use a synthetic fertilizer, add a slow-release type when preparing the container.

Another benefit to growing vegetables in containers – you don't have to fight the weather quite as much. Right now, traditional garden soils are way too wet to even think about planting. But with the container system, you can keep them dry inside a garage until you are ready to plant.

Early spring is the ideal time to plant cool season vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, radish, onions, carrots and potatoes. All can be easily grown in containers, even potatoes!

Gardening is a great stress reliever. If you have kids at home, gardening is the perfect activity to get them outside to enjoy some fresh air and sunshine, all while learning at the same time!

Here's where I come in. I have lots of resource material to help you. The "Kansas Garden Guide" is a full-color, in-depth guide to planting a garden. It is available in each of our Extension offices for \$6. This is one of our only publications that we charge for, but it is worth it. Another very useful publication is "Growing Vegetables in Pots." You can find a link to this publication and others by visiting our Southwind Extension District website and clicking on the "lawn and garden" tab: [www.southwind.ksu.edu](http://www.southwind.ksu.edu)

In addition, I'm always available by phone, e-mail or social media to answer your questions. Don't be afraid to ask! In Extension, we say there are no "dumb" questions. I am here to help you in any way that I can.

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